











THE  
LIFE & CHARACTER  
OF  
ROBERT WATT;  
WHO WAS  
EXECUTED FOR HIGH TREASON,  
AT EDINBURGH, THE 15th OCTOBER, 1794.  
FROM PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE,  
AND THE  
MOST UNQUESTIONABLE CHANNELS OF  
INFORMATION.

CONTAINING,  
AMONG OTHER INTERESTING PARTICULARS,  
An Account of the Remarkable Wickedness of his  
Youth,—his after Pretensions to Religion,—the Sin-  
gular and Surprising Manner of his being Discovered  
and Apprehended,—his Behaviour during his Con-  
finement, and on the Day of his Execution;

TOGETHER WITH  
*His Letters and their Answers, written after his  
Condemnation.*

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,  
A Striking Likeness of ROBERT WATT, with an exact  
Representation of the *Pikes* and *other Instruments* found  
in his possession.

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OF  
ROBERT WATT.

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**T**HE delineation of character is an useful species of writing : There we learn what human nature is : There the various windings of the human heart are unfolded : There the beauties of virtue shine forth in all their celestial splendour ; and there the deformities of vice appear in full view. By consequence, man is taught what to imitate, and what to shun, in an almost endless variety of situations and circumstances in human life. The character now to be reviewed is of a very singular kind. Much we shall find to  
A blame,

blame, and, we are sorry to say, too little to praise.

From motives of prudence and delicacy, Robert Watt concealed his descent from his most intimate acquaintance. Neither surprise nor insinuation could extort the secret from him. It is however believed that he was the natural son of a respectable gentleman in Scotland. Though abandoned by paternal care, the exertions of benevolence saved his infant life. The feelings of the father, however, soon began to move towards his son. An opportunity early offered to express his paternal affection. Being in London, he met with the captain of a vessel to whom he communicated the secret, and entreated him to undertake the charge of the boy. To this the captain consented, and actually employed a friend who paid his board for ten years.

The care and education of natural children being often devolved upon strangers, they are exposed to great hazards, and seldom is their genius guided in a proper direction. Unacquainted with the gentle influence of filial affection, they frequently acquire a ferocity of disposition. The meliorating force of domestic tenderness is unfelt by them. Their parents being in a great measure  
destitute



destitute of natural affection to them, they are apt to imbibe the same spirit and temper.

The unfortunate subject of this narrative, when arrived at maturity, was ardently desirous to discover his mother. He exerted himself to the utmost in vain. In the most earnest manner, he often entreated the gentleman, who paid his board, to inform him. 'This, however, he could not, because he himself was ignorant of the secret Mother.'

*Perhaps* it was this very mother, whose external appearance and dress indicated that she occupied a superior station in life, who one day entered the castle a little before his death, and, with frantic concern painted in her countenance, hovered about the garrison, entreating to see the criminals, in order to converse with them about their eternal concerns. And if that person was indeed the mother, what must have been her feelings on this occasion, and more particularly on the fatal day in which her son suffered by the laws of his country! But let us leave the mother in the dark shade, abandoned to the mercy of her own feelings, and return to the unfortunate son.

Early indeed, inveterate depravity appeared in his  
conduct.

conduct. Even when an infant, he gave foreboding proofs of a vicious temper. The buddings of reason only tended to unfold the latent perverseness of his heart. Nor was he a stranger to calamity in this infant period. He was caused early to drink of the bitter waters which flow from descended guilt. Among the other diseases incident to infancy, he was seized with the small pox. With that loathsome disease, he was so grievously afflicted, that his recovery was deemed improbable, and his *grave clothes were actually made*. But what appears impossible to man, is possible to God. Divine Wisdom saw meet not to cut off this depraved branch of human nature, at so early a period. Often the death of infants is immoderately lamented by parents, whilst they are unmindful that vicious conduct sometimes constrains the mind to wish, that an early fate had prevented those vices from arriving at maturity. There can be little reason to doubt that such is now the case with Watt's connections.

Rescued from death, and restored to health, as he emerged from infancy, the stubbornness of his disposition increased in strength. Suddenly he abandoned all fear of man, and refused to be restrained in the execution of his mischievous designs. Singular cunning and roguery tinged all his youthful

youthful sports. Despising the authority of his guardians, he attended all the fairs and markets, which are generally the scenes of folly and dissipation. One excursion of this nature had well nigh proved fatal to him. His guardians being exposed to great trouble, by his improper conduct at these public markets, were determined to detain him from one in the neighbourhood. Perverse and dissipated, he was equally determined to go. Having however to cross a small river, express orders were given to the boatmen not to allow him to enter the ferry-boat. The country people crowded to the boat, but he was too well known to avoid notice among them. His inventive cunning, however, devised a method to effectuate his purpose. The road to the boat was exceedingly narrow, and on either side were two high rocks. Watt climbed up the back of one of these rocks in order to come down upon the face of it, and so leap into the boat unperceived. Desperate are the attempts of an impetuous temper. In his way down both his feet slipped, and he moved slowly along the rock, lying on his back. The alarm was given that he would be drowned, the deep and rapid river washing the foot of the rock. But, to the utter surprise of all present, he stopped just as his feet touched the water, though there the rock was equally smooth and steep.

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In this dangerous position it was deemed improper to attempt to save him by removing the boat to the foot of the rock, lest he should drop into the river when moved in the least; therefore they let down a rope from the top of it, by which he was drawn up, and so rescued from sudden death.

Both this miraculous deliverance and also his recovery from the small-pox, often deeply impressed the mind of Watt, and through the deceit of his heart, made him hope for deliverance from death, even in the very last hour. Still he faintly expected that the same miraculous Power exerted in his behalf, when his feet were dipped in the water, would save him from death, though his feet were standing on the scaffold. This expectation he himself actually expressed, ten days before his death. Powerful indeed is the love of life in the human breast! Vigorous also is the influence of deceit upon frail man! Nor can human language express the infatuating methods, used by the Great Enemy of man, to divert the human mind from flying speedily, and instantly to the *Only Refuge* set before sinners in the Gospel. Vain, however, were all Watt's hopes of deliverance from death. Now the cup of iniquity was full, and just vengeance about to descend.

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The singular deliverance from drowning made no important impression upon the mind of the wicked youth. His depravity kept pace with his years, and the fullen depth of his character; more and more unfolded. He early manifested an inveterate aversion to public worship. When urged to go to church, he would fly and hide himself; on no occasion could his proud, vicious, untoward temper be restrained. When punished for his bad conduct, he would threaten, and even attempt, to take away his own life, and often concealed himself for several nights, that it might be imagined he had murdered himself. Such were the means he used to deter his guardians from punishing him for future crimes, and by which he obtained full liberty to gratify his depraved passions, which he did to a mournful length indeed. He became the corrupter of the morals of the young, the active ringleader in the paths of folly, and the pest of the place in which he resided.

Unlamented is the removal of the vicious. About the age of ten years, to the great joy of that place, he was removed to Perth. By the prudence of his father, he was there placed under a respectable gentleman. Then a very singular and sudden change took place, both in his feelings and conduct. The vicious boy, removed from the scene  
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of his youthful wickedness, and placed under a proper guardian, began to experience, that he was no longer his own master. This circumstance produced reflection upon his dreadful crimes, the very first night, (as himself narrated a few days before his death). When lying on his bed, he began to reflect upon his past life, the reflection so strongly agitated his soul, that he wept bitterly. Inconsideration ruins the vicious. Driven in the tempest of passion, they seldom reflect upon the dishonour of their conduct. Almost invincible is the force of reflection on the reasonable powers. In this instance, it made even the heart of obdurate Watt to feel, and his eyes to stream with tears. Nor would reflection permit him any longer to remain negligent of the reasonable duty of prayer. He commenced that work, to which he was an entire stranger. Ardently he supplicated forgiving Heaven to pardon his past crimes. When sent to school, he was no more the perverse and untoward boy, but the sober and diligent scholar. In school he read the Sacred Writings with particular concern, and was often much affected with the force of Divine Truth. The happy effects were suddenly visible in his external conduct. Nay the reading of the history of Christ's life, meditation, and prayer soon became so pleasant to him, that he set apart two hours every afternoon for these devotional



tional exercises. To prevent distraction of mind he would often sit in the dark. One evening, when employed in his usual exercises, he instantaneously imagined that he heard his own mind addressing him thus: *Notwithstanding all this attention to religion, thou art but an hypocrite.*

Instantly after, the woes pronounced upon the hypocrite in the New Testament, came in all their force upon his young mind. But so little was he then acquainted with religion in speculation, that he did not rightly know what an hypocrite meant. The most he could recollect concerning hypocrisy, was that it was some very bad thing. That circumstance however produced an enquiry into the meaning of that word, the appellation of which he so justly merited in after life. But the effects of this sudden flash of conviction were of short duration. The terror and anxiety produced gradually subsided, and he regained his former serenity. Nor did he cease to spend the evenings in devotion, and mourning over the follies of his youth. Often also he would employ the pen to advance his knowledge, and to aid his devotions. One evening, when writing, he suddenly felt such strong conceptions of the holiness of God; compared with his own guilt, as produced the most violent emotions in his mind, nay to such a

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degree

degree that he instantly threw down the pen, and prostrated himself on the ground, crying for mercy.

In this externally pious manner, he past some of his days in that family. But the arrangements of Providence, rendering his removal to another one necessary, he felt himself very unhappy in being introduced into one which called not on the name of the Father of all. This grievously afflicted the then pious youth. He remonstrated with the heads of the family respecting this criminal conduct, and was successful in his attempt to establish the worship of God in that family. Upon the reading of this, the sacred admonition comes in all its force upon the mind, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'—How noble and bold was the conduct of this religious youth at that period! How ardently did his soul burn for the interests of religion, and the good of society! But ah, true wisdom forbids to draw hasty conclusions, respecting the religion of the young! Ye young, be jealous over your own hearts, and guard your youthful steps.

Under the impressions of religion and acting in the manner above narrated, young Watt was admitted to the table of the Lord, about the age of sixteen. Many young set out well, in the ways  
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of godliness who afterwards bring great disgrace upon the Christian name. Young Watt continued regularly to retire from the world, and to dedicate two hours every afternoon to religious exercises, and his external conduct corresponded. But in the midst of this employment, it was one day suggested to his mind, 'this is hard work indeed; and supposing one to come at last to heaven, he must always be employed in such exercises, which will be exceedingly laborious; it would therefore be better to give it over altogether.' Strongly impressed with this idea, one day while walking on the North Inch of Perth, by the river side, it came suddenly into his mind, 'why endure all this anguish of mind, and concern about religion, leap at once into the river, and terminate your life.' So violent was this temptation upon his imperious temper, that with great difficulty it was resisted. He vanquished it however, and happily escaped the crime of self-murder. Continuing externally sober, and regular in his attendance upon the public institutions of religion, Watt shone bright among the religious circle in Perth. He also prepared for acting his part in the busy scene of life. Being early introduced into the academy of that place, he made considerable progress in several of the branches there taught, and was prepared for the



mercantile line, for which it is probable he was destined by his father. He himself, however, was strongly inclined to the sacred office. It was also intended that he should seek his fortune in a foreign clime: but this he overruled, it being different from his own inclinations.

Therefore about the age of twenty-four, he removed to Edinburgh bearing the character of a sober, religious young man. By his own exertion he there obtained a place, and served a gentleman, in the capacity of clerk, for several years, much respected in his line. Recommended from Perth, he was admitted into a religious family, where he continued about seven years. Assuming the appearance of religion, and behaving himself soberly, he was introduced to the acquaintance of many respectable characters. It is proper also to narrate, that the gentleman in whose house he then resided, still avers, that during all that period, he never observed any part of his conduct inconsistent with the character of the man, or the Christian. There, however, the reigning bent of his character appeared: for he was so reserved and silent in his temper, that his landlord, though a discerning man, also declares he never could understand his real character. Cunning, intrigue, and roguery lurked in the dark and secret shade, but  
temptation

temptation can draw them forth to public view. The natural and acquired abilities of Watt qualified him for speculating concerning religion, and his external deportment entitled him to the charitable opinion of those who knew him ; consequently his character shone bright in the religious world for many years. Nay more, in consequence of the deceit of the human mind, he might even then have been sincere in his profession. The latent depravity of his heart, was unknown to himself. Who can question the sincerity of Hazael's exclamation to the prophet Elisha, when, upon being informed of his future crimes, he said, " What ? " is thy servant a dog, that he should do this " thing ? " Unacquainted with the depravity of his own heart, Hazael supposed it impossible for him to arrive at such a height of vice as to rip up women with child, and to deluge Judah with blood ; these things however he actually did, when, by deceitful steps, his ambition and cruelty arrived at maturity. So it is reasonable to suppose, that Watt was at that time sincere in his profession, and ready to spurn at the idea of being thought capable of such cruelty and wickedness, as afterwards stained his character. O the depth of self-deceit, and the hidden vileness of the human heart.

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It was during this fair period of his life that he turned his view to a superior station; and, with that design, made some progress in the Latin tongue. But his avaricious heart could find small gratification from that quarter: Therefore his natural avarice overcame his love of literature, and his temporary emotions towards general utility. What human motive can withstand the force of avarice? It entwines around the heart, and operates in every action. Miraculous indeed is deliverance from its baneful influence. The leading bent of Watt's mind, could not long be satisfied with the small pittance of a clerk, therefore he abandoned his literary views, and hastened into business. That he might do this with more probable hopes of success, he went to London, where his supposed father then was, and received, as some say, several hundred pounds, to aid him in commencing his mercantile course.

Those more intimately acquainted with Watt, date this period as the æra of his avarice vanquishing his religious principles; nor are they wrong in this conjecture: But this was not effected by avarice alone. No! the fashionable amusements of the metropolis added their baneful strength. Favourably received and encouraged by his supposed father, in the full prospect of future opulence,

lence, and removed from the eyes of his religious acquaintance, he frequented the play-houses, the opera, and all the other public destroyers of human virtue. Having no necessity in London to wear the sanctimonious garb of religion he assumed the fine and fashionable gallant, and drank deep of the intoxicating cup of sinful pleasure. Many young men have imperceptibly been drawn away to these wanton pleasures, who have there had their virtue sapped to the foundation, their consciences benumbed, and every honourable restraint removed. The approach of sinful pleasure is sweet, but its retreat very bitter. The least deviation from purity of conduct is exceedingly dangerous to man. Such Watt found by mournful experience. Nay more, it is only when the mind is free from restraints that the true character appears. Watt's conduct in London tended also to evince the natural duplicity of his heart. While he behaved in the manner above related, he appeared the man of religion, in the company of the pious. Alas, it is not every one who can talk concerning the doctrines and the duties of religion, who deserves the appellation of a good man, neither ought the pious to be too rash, in forming their opinions of strangers.

Returning to Edinburgh, he entered upon  
business,

business, and, with all the eagerness of avarice, hastened to be rich. But ah, in London his external piety was so sullied, that it was obvious upon his return home. To a particular acquaintance Watt himself acknowledged, and bitterly bewailed his foolish and sinful conduct in London. Happy for him that his regret had been sincere, and speedy repentance marked his conduct. But his London pleasures had so hardened his heart, and vitiated his conscience, that he gradually lost all relish for religion, though he still retained the form of godliness. But the form cannot long shelter the base hypocrite. In the course of his mercantile transactions, several circumstances marked his decline in religion. In them he shewed that his love of gain rose superiour to his love of justice. That man's religion is vain, which does not teach him to deal justly and nobly, to despise defrauding his brother. Nor will the man who defrauds his brother, do justice to his King. Dealing in wines and spirituous liquors, it is believed that he used the *base and unjust practice of defrauding Government*, by smuggling to a considerable extent. Seldom, however, has one become rich, by defrauding a lawful and mild Government. Nor did Watt. Some of his acquaintance coming to the knowledge, or to the suspicion, of his smuggling, no small gloom was thrown over his pretended religious



religious character. Spectators are not so indifferent to conduct as the individual often imagines. When this charge, however, was produced against him by one of his friends, he confidently denied it, and threatened the friend who so kindly reprov-  
ed him. A violation of truth was among the first of evils, and hath been in future days the beginning of much transgression. Dissimulation made a rapid progress in his mind. Under the pretended appearance of religion, he pursued his ungodly courses unsuspected by the multitude, and the few who began to see through the veil of hypocrisy were delicate in mentioning any thing to detect him. But the hope of the hypocrite *must* perish. The reign of dissimulation must be of short continuance. The leading bent of the mind will force itself through every obstruction; and such was the case with Watt.

The state of his finances fully proves that he was unsuccessful in business. This racked his ambitious and avaricious mind, and gave exertion to all his intriguing powers. But repeated attempts of this kind only tended to embarrass him the more. In this state of mind he cast his avaricious eye upon the public purse of the nation, and determines, if by any means possible, to obtain part of it. About this period the spirit of dis-

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affection



affection raged in the country. All were tossed in the sea of politics. Some embraced and strenuously defended one system of political principles, and others embraced and laboured to support another system. Watt pretended to defend the present happy Constitution of this Country. In every company, and on all occasions, throwing out the most bitter invectives against all who favoured the principles of those denominated *The Friends of the People*. But notwithstanding his present pretensions, the intriguing darkness of his character still leaves it doubtful whether he was then candid in his pretensions of loyalty to Government, or not. The reverse appears to be the truth. Or rather, he was indifferent to the fate of either side, provided he could enrich himself by the spoils. Pretending, however, to be a strenuous supporter of the Constitution, he entered the list of those gentlemen in Scotland, who engaged to support Government at the expence of their lives and fortunes. He had the audacity also to write to the Secretary of State, offering to give particular information of the persons and proceedings of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh. As we wish not to retail information already in the possession of the public, we refer our readers to Watt's Trial, for the account how matters past between him and his Majesty's Ministers. Does it not appear pretty

pretty evident, that he wished to receive money for information, and at the same time to give no information of important consequence ?

During this period of his pretended loyalty to the King, he still retained the character of religious, and surpassed many in the splendor of his profession. But it is action and not profession, which constitutes the character of the good man. Nor is it candid to ridicule sobriety, because notorious offenders have pretended to religion. Nay, their pretensions to it, clearly evince, that it is deemed a thing of true excellence. The dross mingled with the gold does not prove that there is no real gold existing. But dissimulation quickly exhausts its own strength ; and men shall hiss the hypocrite out of his place.

About this time, a circumstance occurred for the detection of Watt's religious, as did afterwards, for the detection of his political hypocrisy. A Chapel began to be built at the foot of Leith-wynd. A preacher in town was intended by those concerned to be Minister of said Chapel. Watt having shown many marks of affection for that preacher, and being deemed a person who might be of considerable service in the management of that chapel, and in the business



of its being received into the connection of the Established Church, he, upon particular entreaty, was prevailed upon to take part in that business. During the building of this chapel, and after it was received into the connection of the established church, Watt continued to exert himself for its prosperity. At length the gentleman, for whom it was built, was ordained therein. Watt continued to act as a manager, and as the intimate friend of the Minister, who consulted him, and whose advice he generally followed, in matters relative to that chapel. According to the custom of the Church of Scotland, it soon became necessary to have some elders ordained in that infant congregation. It was thought proper to introduce none of the managers into that office at that time. Immediately upon this being mentioned to Watt, his pride was offended, and his ambitious soul began to boil with rage against the Minister. He headed the other managers, and began to plot revenge. Unable to fix any immoral practice upon the Minister, by which to deprive him of his sacred office, and by consequence of his only support for a numerous, but young family, he invented and propagated scandalous falsehoods, charging the Clergyman with embezzling the money given to erect said chapel, with prevarication and scandal, because he had consulted

consulted him, how he should prudently act in his ministerial capacity, towards a person accused of improper conduct. By his cunning activity, and aided by the rest of the managers, equally enraged as himself, because the Minister was not disposed to make them elders, the character of that clergyman was so aspersed, that he was almost ashamed to appear among his religious friends, whose minds began to be alienated from him. Conscious, however, of innocence, and of upright intentions, he either defended his character, or waited in silence until Providence should manifest his innocence; at the same time watching the operations of his adversaries. An opportunity was at length afforded, clearly to detect the treachery and baseness of Watt. After he had prevailed upon the proprietors of said Chapel to dispoise to him, and other three entirely under his influence, the Chapel in trust-right, taking special care that no person could call them to an account how they disposed of the money of the Chapel, nor how they conducted any one part of the business; then wishing so to deceive the minister, and use him as the instrument of his own ruin, supposing him to be ignorant of what he had been so industriously circulating against him, one evening he desired an interview with him. No correspondence having existed, for a considerable time, between them, the  
minister



minister found it necessary to act with a great deal of caution ; he therefore requested three gentlemen to be present at that interview, to whom Watt had told several falsehoods of him, tending to ruin his reputation and usefulness,—*in every one of which and in every particular circumstance his base conduct* and villainy were proved to his face. But though this afforded an opportunity to vindicate injured innocence, and to save a public character from infamy, yet it only tended to inflame the rage of Watt, who refused to be ashamed of such a detection of criminality. Invested with the property of the Chapel, and all the funds thereof in his hands, he began to oppress the minister, by non-payment of his stipend, and by instigating those, to whom, in consequence of this mode of procedure, he owed small sums, to arrest, and commence law-suits against him,

In the meantime, Watt and his confederates laboured to circulate insinuations to the prejudice of the minister's character among his hearers, so that it was found prudent to call a meeting of the Congregation in order to lay the matter before them. At that meeting many bitter invectives *were openly thrown out against* the minister by the other managers. Then Watt read a paper, containing a  
number

number of questions, but no assertions, all of an inflammatory and scandalous nature, tending to injure the character of the minister, and to prejudice the minds of his people against him. Conscious of innocence, the minister heard all in silence, and without any other emotion than what was unavoidable for one in such a disagreeable situation. Then he rose up and desired the Preses to request Watt to sign these questions along with the rest, and abide by the consequences. But this he refused to do; then the Minister reminded the people, that unless Watt and the rest should sign these obligations, or authenticate the same in their presence, they were bound to hold them as words of course, and added, that he had in his hand a Narrative of the whole matter, which he was ready to deliver to the Preses, to be read by the Clerk in their hearing, which narrative he had signed, and would prove on the spot every assertion therein that might be called in question. Several things Watt, accordingly, endeavoured to contradict, all of which were verified to the full satisfaction of the meeting, and he and his associates were forced to consent to denude and give up the chapel to the congregation, upon being paid their money, and the debts taken off their hands. Upon the third day after, when they again met to fulfil the agreement, Watt and his confederates,

having



having received encouragement from the chief creditor, and sorry at their hearts to quit the reins of power, strongly averred, that he had not made any such agreement, though a minute was wrote bearing the same, and the transaction done in the presence of several hundreds.

What opinion can the world form of him and his associates, when they are assured, that, at this second meeting, they all averred, that they were ready to swear that no such agreement was made, to give up their connection with said Chapel. At that meeting, however, by the active and benevolent exertions of one of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, who generously stepped forward in the defence of that injured Minister, and his large family, Watt and the rest were forced to keep to their agreement, and, after many struggles and much trouble, they were, with disgrace, dismissed the connection of the chapel. The malice of Watt, however, did not here stop. 'Wrath is cruel, anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy?' Cruelty never saith it is enough, nor can malice be satisfied even with revenge itself. When he could do no more, he instigated one of the rest of the managers to raise an unjust and ill-founded process against that minister, to oppress him, which we are sorry to learn is still pending, but which we hope, by the equitable laws of our country,



country, will soon, it may be hoped, share the same fate with the rest of Watt's mischievous plots against that public character. Such was the conduct of Watt towards that Clergyman; while in the mean time, he was employed in plotting to scatter destruction, and to overturn our excellent Constitution. By such conduct, at the same time, the false pretensions of Watt to religion were fully ascertained, and his malice and baseness seen by all his religious acquaintance. Since the secret motives of action are unseen by the mortal eye, it is only from leading features in a character that its true nature can be estimated. When the mind exerts its full force, then the inward qualities appear. Proud, ambitious, impetuous, and malicious in a singular degree, Watt appears to have been one who could brook no disappointment. Disappointed in his wishes, he instantly betrays the cause of that minister. From an intimate friend, he becomes a malicious and violent persecutor. Infatuately beginning to rail against one whom he the day before extolled; unmindful that no new cause was to be produced. Anger and malice, for the time beclouding his reason, induced him, as in an after case, to invent plans which he never could execute, because of their baseness and absurdity. Unsuccessfulness and disgrace always mark those plans which are devoid of reason, and the production of malice.

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These dispositions of mind, which Watt displayed in a narrow circle, soon grew so strong upon him, that he exerted them in a more extended, but a more dangerous one. Mention has already been made of his correspondence with the Secretary of State, in order to give information of the proceedings of The Friends of the People. As appears from his trial, he said that he knew a person who would give some very important information to Government, but that he behoved to have a *thousand pounds* at least. This being a large sum, it was exceeding proper to enquire minutely, before expending so much of the public treasure. The inquiry turned out unfavourable to Watt's avarice, and the money remained in its proper place. Little argument is necessary to show, that Watt was the person who was to enjoy the thousand pound. If not, would not he have given up the name of that person? Nay, if his main object, as pretended, was to give information to government, it is most probable he would have given up that person, that either he might have been forced to disclose the great secret, or suffer just punishment. But ah! it was the gratification of avarice and ambition, and not the good of government, which Watt thirsted after. Sad, however, was his disappointment upon a refusal: For months he had ranged the country, particularly the city of Perth, and some other parts in the North,

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to find some information that would merit such a handsome reward. Finding none of importance, he attempts to impose upon his Majesty's minister. Unsuccessful in this, his avaricious, ambitious, and haughty soul began to boil with anger, and to meditate revenge. Now two objects are in future to be pursued. Still the gratification of avarice, and also revenge against Government. At once the infatuated mind of Watt suggested, that by seizing the Banks and Public-offices the loss of the thousand pounds might be retrieved; he therefore dropped his correspondence with Mr. Dundas, and, about the time of Margarot's Trial, entered into the views of the *Friends of the People*, with all the enthusiasm of reality, and not of pretence. Rich and great he would be, independent of the public purse; and malice he would wreck upon the nation, because of refusal. Both blood and treasure should pay for his disappointment. There is another consideration which seems to prove, that Watt did not intend to betray the friends of the people, but only to enrich and aggrandize himself, and be revenged on government. The circumstance is this; that had he really intended to betray the friends of the people, then he never would have brought forward his plan himself, but would have suggested the heads thereof to Downie, or some of the rest, and induced them to propose it, that so, when he



saw the matter ripe, he might inform upon *them*, and escape himself. But how can it be conceived that he would have been the inventor and the proposer of that horrible plan, if he had designed to betray them: For upon evidence it would have appeared, that he was the principal criminal, supposing him to become the informer. In short, there cannot be suggested to the human mind any principle of action, that can account for his dropping his correspondence with the Secretary, and his forming the direful plan himself, but this one, that he embraced the views of the friends of the people, in order to enrich and avenge himself of government. The former reasoning, and this view of Watt's character is corroborated by the following anecdote of him.

One day being asked by an intimate acquaintance if he was serious in his joining that association of Gentlemen who professed to be ready to hazard their all in defence of government; and if he was ready to give his life and fortune in its defence: His reply was, that he would give neither the one nor the other,—a proof of his insincerity of heart. After pausing a little, he said to that gentleman, this is a *sad business*, I hear that the people are providing arms, in order to rise against government. When that gentleman expressed, in strong language,  
his

his abhorrence of such a measure, he shifted the conversation.

After this period he was introduced into one of the societies of the Friends of the People, by one who pledged his word of honour for him as a true and steady friend to their cause. Still, however, he remained unsuspected by any person, and continued to speak in defence of government. Watt soon rose to such eminence among his new associates, that he was entrusted with their most important business, and appears not to have been the last in the band of those who sought the ruin of their country. But the interposition of Providence, which has been so frequently and clearly displayed for the salvation of Britain, was conspicuous in the discoveries of Watt and his bloody companions. Previous to this, none ever so much as suspected him as a friend of the people, but quite the reverse. It was entirely unknown, unless to them with whom he confederated. But all things are known to the Ruler of the nations, who detected him in the following manner :

One of the name of Nielson, a manufacturer living in Musselburgh, whom we are sorry to learn is now commenced Preacher in England, becoming bankrupt, several of his creditors  
were



were using legal measures to obtain payment. With this view several applications being made to one of the Magistrates (whose exertions in behalf of government justly merit the esteem of his country,) he thought it full time to look after the payment of a small sum that Nielson was due to himself. Immediately, therefore, that gentleman took coach and went to Musselburgh. Enquiring respecting Nielson and the state of his affairs, he received information that a large weighty trunk had been sent a few days ago into town from his shop by the coach. He went to his house and requested him to settle his account, either by money or by goods, which was accordingly done. The benevolence of that Magistrate induced him to communicate the information respecting the trunk of goods to the next creditor, who applied to him for legal diligence against Nielson. Upon inquiry, the time when the coach brought in the trunk was ascertained. The driver was interrogated whither it went. He replied, that a porter carried it off some where ; the porter being brought, he conveyed them to Mr. Watt's cellar whither he had taken the trunk. An order to search was obtained. In searching, some of the horrible pikes were found. Then another warrant to search Watt's house, and to apprehend him was issued. On farther search, more  
of



of these pikes were found, and also a fount of types, that had been used in printing an inflammatory hand-bill to circulate among the Fencibles. Watt, who had been from home, coming in and finding the officers of Justice in the house and searching it; in a high and surly tone, inquired 'Why, and by what authority they were searching his house, and breaking open his presses?' One of them asked what he intended to do with these instruments that were lying on the table. In a surly manner he answered 'It was none of their business, he would tell that when required by proper authority,' and proceeded to threaten the messengers. One of them then said, *Sir, we have not only authority to search thy house, but to make thee our prisoner*, which was instantly done, and he conveyed on the night of the 11th of May to the Sheriff-clerk's Chamber, for examination. Thus the providence of God, which was so miraculously displayed in his deliverance, when about to be drowned in the river, was now singularly displayed in his detection, and in the salvation of this country. Does not this call upon all to be grateful, and also to hope that Almighty God will still protect our nation?

Upon examination, Watt would say little or nothing. He was immediately, however, upon what  
was

was evident from the things found in his house, committed to prison, and none permitted to see him.

Thus he was apprehended, just when cruelly meditating destruction, and preparing to spill the blood of thousands, in order to satiate his avaricious soul, with the plunder of the Banks and public Offices. Nor, it may be supposed, would private coffers have escaped his hands.

When Watt, upon his first examination, would give no discovery respecting the pikes, immediately two of the messengers went again to his house, and inquired at his servant what smiths came to call upon her master, when she informed them of Orrock and Brown, and of the names of some other persons, who were instantly apprehended: These appeared in evidence against Watt. After his imprisonment, he continued two weeks in the common prison, and then was removed to the Castle where he remained until the day of his execution. During his confinement in the castle, by a particular grant of the Sheriff of the county, one, Captain R—, was allowed to wait upon him, concerning the recovery of some money that he borrowed a little before his imprisonment. When he requested the loan of that sum, he gave in pledge of it some bills  
upon



upon one who was bankrupt before that period, and in the Abbey for safety from his creditors. Captain Ross not knowing this, accepted of these bills; but, to his surprise and vexation, he soon found out the deceit of him whom he thought one of the best of men. When this gentleman waited upon him to request his money, and to inform him that if he did not settle with him instantly, he would expose his effects to sale, Watt raged, and chided him, saying, Why was he afraid for his money? he would soon be liberated, and find money to pay him all demands. Such was the deceit of his character, that he laboured to impose even then on the man who had been but too credulous before. Nay more, he prevailed upon him so far, that Mr. Ross went to the Sheriff to request his being liberated upon bail. But that excellent gentleman knew too much of Watt's guilt, and was more true to his country than to allow such a person to depart from custody. About this time Watt wrote to his supposed father for some money to supply his demands, but was refused it. Such is the infatuation of the human mind, that, conscious of guilt as he was, he notwithstanding frequently averred, after his sentence, that he had no thought of ever being found guilty, until it was so. He remained in the Castle until true bills were found against him by the Grand Jury, without any person seeing him, unless by par-

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ticular



ticular warrant from the Sheriff of the County. Nor did many wait upon him, even when there was access to him according to law, between his indictment and his sentence. It is narrated, in his trial, that he received his sentence with penitential concern, and, when asked by the clerk of arraigns, if he had any thing farther to say in his own defence, he only covered his face with his hands, and wept bitterly. After his sentence, it was some time before any other clergyman than Dr. Baird saw him, it being his turn to attend the criminals, at the desire of the Magistrates of the city. Afterwards he wrote to another minister, requesting a visit from him.

This card, however, was wrote in such a style, that the Clergyman hesitated, for some days, to go and visit him. In the mean time he wrote to another, who immediately went. To this minister he expressed his sorrow for his crimes, but, at the same time, such strong hopes in the atonement of Christ, and of his interest therein, as much surprised him, and induced him to remind Watt of the great necessity of not being deceived in a matter of such vast importance.

After a few days' delay, the Minister to whom he first wrote, unable any longer to resist the request of a dying man, went to visit him. He found Watt apparently much humbled, and ve-

ly penitent ; blaming neither Judges nor Jury, nor any other person than himself for his sentence. With that singular faithfulness, which marks his character, that Clergyman dealt candidly with Watt ; reminding him, that the first interview he had with him, was concerning the business of that Chapel already alluded to, and that then he viewed his exertions both as benevolent and religious ; that, whatever was his opinion of that matter then, he himself formed very favourable ideas of him.

But, to his great surprize, he afterwards heard, that, when he could not obtain the whole rule and government of said Chapel, regardless both of the interests of religion in a rising congregation, and also of the character of him whom he professed so much to esteem, he maliciously sought to overturn and to ruin the whole : Comparing that with his late conduct, for which he was condemned, he was forced to form a very unfavourable opinion of him ;—nay, that he was such a great sinner, that he was utterly at a loss what to say unto him, but only that deceit and the love of money seemed to have been his ruling motives : Adding, what then shall I say, but what the Holy Ghost hath already said, *that liars do not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Nay more, the Holy Ghost also saith, that covetousness, the reigning

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passion in your soul, was idolatry, and that *no idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God.* By these, and many similar expressions, he laboured to awaken his conscience, and to induce him, in real earnest, to cry to God for mercy. At the same time assuring him, that true penitence would lead him to a candid acknowledgment of his crimes, and to a discovery of whatever might tend to benefit society; and that it would lead him to cry mightily to God for mercy.

Watt listened in solemn silence, but seemed most grievously afflicted, and so much agitated, that the minister said afterwards, that he supposed nature would soon be overcome, and that he despaired of his living till the day fixed for his execution. But the first shock is usually the most afflictive to humanity, and if nothing more than nature operate within, these violent impressions will gradually subside.

Under the convictions of guilt and great injury committed, he, next day, wrote to that minister, whom his malice and cruelty had laboured to ruin in his character and usefulness, humbly requesting him to come and visit him that day, or as soon as convenient. Conviction of sin leads to an acknowledgment of it, and the near view of death tends to cause men see matters in a just point of view.

When



When the tide of his malice subsided, his soul was galled with the recollection of his conduct to that public character. Upon receiving that invitation, the minister, with a readiness consistent with his character, had no objections instantly to go and express his forgiveness; but, in consequence of his former usage, and his having often threatened him, he was afraid lest Watt should do him personal injury. It may appear strange, that any suspicions should be retained of a man, under sentence of death, acting such a part, but the former knowledge of him had such effect on the mind of that Clergyman. Nor would he venture himself, until he had consulted those ministers who had been with Watt, concerning his present temper of mind. Then taking a person with him, he waited upon Watt; but he found him an altered man indeed. No more the proud imperious, domineering, cruel Watt, but the condemned, self-abased criminal; acknowledging his sad conduct towards him, and bewailing the great trouble that he had occasioned to him and his family, and his cruel intentions against them. Lamenting also the grief he had caused to his religious acquaintance, and the disgrace he had brought upon the Christian name.

That Clergyman begged him to give his mind no uneasiness on account of him, for with that same sincerity with which he begged pardon from God, he  
heartily

heartily forgave all that he had spoken, intended, and actually done against him. Such ready forgiveness and melting sympathy, shown when beholding him in such a situation, quite overcame the mind even of Watt. The strongest signs of penitence and deep concern were manifested, and hopes of his well-being in another world afforded. In the most pressing manner he entreated that minister to see him again, which was cheerfully complied with.

Watt's trial having been published, and circulated, a gentleman in Perth, with whom he had formerly been intimate, moved with compassion for him, wrote the following excellent letter :

DEAR SIR,

*Perth, 7th Sept. 1794.*

I have read your history in the news-papers, and it quite confounds me. I thought Robert Watt would have been the last man, that would have lifted up a hand or a tongue against the excellent Constitution of his Country. Nor do I think that any errors that may exist in the administration of the British government can justify a plot so dreadful as that of which you are convicted.

You have worn the christian name from your youth. But christianity and your late conduct are  
very



very inconsistent. Every one who fears God will honour the King. The religion of Jesus teaches us to yield all due obedience to lawful superiors; that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. In short, every christian is strictly bound to the faithful discharge of all relative duties, and the person who does not pay attention to these, is unworthy of the christian name.

O what could induce you to act the part you have done! If money was your object, it was a pitiful object for which to defile your conscience, and to ruin your soul. Your character and experience is described, by Paul, 1 Tim. 3—10. v.

3 ‘ If any man teach otherwise, and consent  
‘ not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our  
‘ Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is  
‘ according to godliness.

4 ‘ He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting  
‘ about questions and strifes of words whereof com-  
‘ eth envy, strife, railings, evil surmising,

5 ‘ Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds  
‘ and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is  
‘ godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

6 ‘ But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 ‘ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and*  
‘ *it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

8. ‘ And



8 ' And having food and raiment, let us be  
' therewith content.

9 ' But they that will be rich fall into tempta-  
' tion, and a snare, and *into* many foolish and  
' hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction  
' and perdition.

10 ' For the *love of money is the root of all*  
' *evil* ; which while some coveted after, they have  
' erred from the faith, and pierced themselves  
' through with many sorrows.'

May your fall teach every one not to trust in themselves, but in that omnipotent grace which is freely promised in the gospel, and that grace is still held out to you, to me, to the very chief of sinners. That rich, all-conquering grace can still pluck you as a brand out of the burning, and save you in the Lord Jesus with an everlasting salvation.

I believe your earthly Sovereign cannot, with propriety, give you a pardon: but the Almighty Sovereign of universal nature can glorify himself in your salvation. For, O transporting truth! Jesus, the Son of God, completed on mount Calvary a perfect righteousness for the justification of the ungodly. And the God of truth assures us, that whosoever believes this shall be saved. O! that the Lord, the Spirit, may teach you, as a guilty sinner,

finer, to take sanctuary under the covert of the blood and righteousness of the Lamb that was slain, and who still waits to be gracious to you. I hope you will make an ingenuous confession of the crime for which you are to suffer, and acknowledge the justice of your sentence. If you are allowed to write, I would be glad to hear from you. If I might be permitted to see you I would come over on purpose. I commend you to the God of all grace, who is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above what you can ask or think.

And I am,

Your well wisher,

W—— G——r.

This affectionate and candid letter, from an intimate friend, made no small impression upon Watt's mind. He reflected upon his conduct, and greatly mourned over his past crimes. When one of the ministers waited upon him, he found him afterwards keenly employed in searching the Scriptures, and writing down any of the passages which appeared most suited to his case; and which seemed either calculated to awaken his conscience, or to show him that God would have mercy upon him, though a very great sinner. He also expressed his anxious fears, lest the present workings of his mind should

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only be the feelings of nature, and the fear of death, and not the powerful and gracious operations of the Holy Ghost upon his soul. Some marks to distinguish between these were mentioned. Among others, that if it was the mere feelings of nature, they would wear off in a little, but if it was the operations of the Spirit they would increase, and in a particular manner they would be accompanied with the deepest and most humiliating view of sin. That such enormous guilt must produce strong convictions, and deep sorrow. That these would show themselves, in a candid confession of whatever might tend to secure the peace of society, which he had laboured to disturb. This confession he averred he would make, as far as he knew any thing to advantage government. At this time, indeed, he appeared to do well, and to be very penitent. But O! the sad corruption of the human heart, and the strong aversion of the mind to salvation!

His acquaintances and religious friends, in Edinburgh, were all struck with his horrible guilt, and concerned for the salvation of his soul, and many prayers began to be offered up in his behalf. One, with whom he was intimate, at this time, wrote him the following letter; for the Sheriff in  
his



his usual concern for the good of the public, did not choose to allow any but ministers to visit him.

SIR,

While musing and mourning over your present uncomfortable situation, and recollecting numberless little circumstances which occurred during our long acquaintance, I thought upon sending you the inclosed copy of a letter from David Tyrie, wrote when near the end of his journey.

Perhaps part of it may not please every person, but the leading Spirit and sentiments of it please me vastly, and seem exceedingly calculated for usefulness to one in your situation. His views were wholly directed to a crucified Saviour, and from what other quarter can any sinful creature look out for relief? If he looks to his anguish of heart, or bitterness of soul because of sin, he can behold nothing but blackness and darkness. If he looks or leans to any former experiences or commendable deeds, he acts equally foolish; all will prove in the issue but broken reeds. If he try to be in bitterness for sin, before believing in Jesus, the attempt will be feeble and fruitless. We are originally to flee to the Saviour for repentance, as much as for any other grace. The illuminating grace of an all-sufficient God, is alone sufficient for these things. There cannot possibly be any

true discovering of the evil of sin, the suitableness, glory and divineness of Jesus, without this. Naturally the understanding is gross darkness, and cannot successfully fix upon any spiritual object, in a gracious way. Nor can the best believer in the world command this; it is as much from the Lord, in the end of life, as in the beginning. They, and they only are happy and safe, who have experimental knowledge of this.

The first epistle of Peter is a capital part of Scripture, and the second is like unto it. If their striking and scrutinising truths are seriously attended unto, and in any measure set home to the heart, they will have a bold tendency to unlock our true state and character before God. Diligence and activity are pressed home, with the most rousing considerations. The readiness of Christ to judge the quick and the dead, the dissolution of the elements, and the other awful proceedings of the Day of Judgment are not trifling incitements to *sift* our state, and to *run* for refuge to the Lord, the Redeemer, that we may be in case to abide the day of his coming?

The Lord in all ages hath raised up miracles of mercy that none may despair. The remembrance of a Manasseh in captivity, the offender on the  
cross,

cross, and Saul of Tarsus in the high way, ought to be fresh in all our minds: for in them was manifested the exceeding riches of divine grace. What God hath once done in this way, is a sample to us of what he can and will do. I cannot extenuate your guilt, but I do pity you, and often try to hold up your situation at a throne of grace, and can positively assure you I am not alone in this. I hope you still value the sympathy and the prayers of the people of God, and that you pray much yourself. Considering the shortness of your allotted time I think you ought to read no book but the Bible, and talk only or chiefly about the concerns of your soul. Be resolutely determined to ly at the feet of a sovereign God, saying, if I perish, it shall be here. I have no doubt but Heaven is peopled with extraordinary sinners. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. This is the land of hope! If you have any inclination that I should call, you may let me know; I am perfectly willing.

I am your's &c.

Edin. Sep. }  
9th 1794. }

J——C——l.

That our readers may have an opportunity of perusing the letter of David Tyrie, a copy  
of



of which was inclosed with the above, we shall also insert it. The dying sayings of all merit consideration. The dying expressions of notorious criminals, and the ground of their hope for mercy, merit most particular consideration.

A Letter from David Tyrie, a little before his execution to Thomas W—— merchant Leith, August the 24th 1782.

DEAR SIR,

I come now to acknowledge the receipt of your very welcome letter, dated the 17th, I could have wished to have received it a few days sooner. It served truly to confirm in that *faith*, on which I was willing to lay hold through Christ Jesus.— On that faith, which by God's blessing has supported me.

The law of man numbered my days, and indeed, during a long confinement, I am free to tell you, that lately, and very lately, the seeds of unbelief were strongly grafted in my nature. I have no experience to boast of, but may truly say, it is not of him that walketh, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. I trust my repentance is through faith. Great indeed are my sins. I have been living in open rebellion to the Scriptures.

tures. Stifling every thought that came across my mind of the word of God, and even—at times, affecting totally to disbelieve the divine and holy revelation of the gospel. But on this truth have I placed my hope—that Jesus Christ died and rose again, for the justification of the guilty and ungodly, who through faith call upon his name. The grand truth I believe is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It may be told to you, my worthy friend, that the minister who every day gave me an hour of his company, told this truth not enough. That I must wait my rest by night, that I must mourn and weep, enumerate and confess my sins, before God would reveal himself to me. I always answered him, I could do nothing of myself. Yesterday I put your letter into his hand (he is a good well meaning man) but he told me he was afraid by my discourse all along, that I relied too much upon its doctrine (viz. doctrines of the gospel) his fear, is my joy. If you know the sentiments of my heart, how would you rejoice, if you knew but at this moment, the full assurance I have in the sinner's hope: how would you praise and glorify God; surely you would kill the fatted calf, and truly say, the lost sheep was found. I look then forward to that happy meeting, when there shall be no more sorrows, or when all tears shall be wiped away. I have  
read

read my Bible to no purpose. I still want the understanding heart. I was in search of the truth, it came upon me, but I knew not how. O that I had but a few of my days to come over again; that you did but know the comfort I enjoy in this blessed assurance, in that glorious view of the gospel held out by God to guilty sinful wretches like me. This is my beloved *son* in whom I am well pleased. Indeed—indeed—my dear friend, you are but too right, guilty, guilty, have I been; my treasons and treachery, both to God and my country, are innumerable, as well as my frauds upon mankind, particularly those whom habit and friendship had led to repose great confidence in me. An adulterer, a blasphemer, a liar, a sabbath-breaker, a false friend, a drunkard, and a heart hardened against God, and the glorious truth of the gospel. Is the blood of Jesus sufficient for all these? yes! thanks be to God, who hath revealed himself in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, ‘come unto me, all ye that weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Will this glorious invitation extend to me,—yes!—through faith I will lay hold of it. Has my blessed, dear Redeemer, thus atoned for my sins?—yes! It is finished; he made complete atonement and satisfaction to offended Justice. And is God so gracious, as to save me in this manner?—yes! The Scripture says there



there is no other name given under heaven, whereby I can be saved, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is the good news, and glad tidings of great joy, that the Gospel has this day proclaimed unto me, to me who am sinful dust and ashes, dead in trespasses and sins, but God hath quickened me, by his own free, sovereign, and boundless Grace; called me to repent by Faith in Christ Jesus. But what reparation can I make to my Country? Dying,—none but the example. Living, I might be accounted and rewarded as one of her favours. I have already, long since, done all I could do with safety. I have lately, but very lately, even within a few days, sought for an occasion or opportunity to do more, with safety to my own conscience, but alas! those in power did not give the opportunity. What atonement can I now, dying, make to individuals? I have wrong'd none. Nothing is in my power. I confess freely to you, my good friend, that my heart was even so hardened as to entertain or harbour thoughts of shutting the door of mercy, and putting God to defiance; a dreadful and sinful thought, by way of filling up the measure of my crimes. And but for the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sins, what should become of me, being a partner with that grand traitor Judas!

Give my last duty to my father. You know bet-

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ter what to say to him than I can tell you. May I also, for Christ's sake, intreat you, to do the same in love, with my blessings to my two innocent Babes, from whom I hope the unhappy fate of their father will be concealed; and if any thing should turn up, I hope you will not be against making out with Mr. V—— and your son Th. to take care of it for me.

Please remember me to all your family, particularly to the Dr. and Mrs. S——. It is now near 10 o'clock on Saturday morning. Mr Vowel is to be with me at 3: and in an hour afterwards, I suppose will be removed to Portsmouth.

May that Faith in which I die, even the Faith of Jesus Christ, who was crucified, and is again risen from the dead, be strengthened in you, in this world, and entering into eternity, give you a joyful meeting, with the redeem'd in Christ. Into Whose hands I commend my spirit. Farewell, and believe me,

My Dearest Sir,

Your ever sincere and comforted Friend,

Winchester Gaol, }  
August 24th 1782. }

DAVID TYRRE.

These

These two excellent letters made but a feeble impression upon Watt's mind ; for his fellow criminal being now placed beside him, conversation blunted the edge of concern. Another cause was that he began to distract his mind about writing a Petition for pardon, and writing to the Lord Advocate, and another gentleman, to second his petition. Though, in consequence of the depth of his character, he pretended that he was employing himself, as if he had not petitioned, yet his behaviour indicated the contrary. The dying naturally grasp at the least hope of life. No principle is stronger, than the hope of life. Nor did his sorrow for sin appear at all conformable to the magnitude of his guilt. It will readily be granted, that it is difficult to decide in this matter, but it appears singular, that he never obtained such a view of sin, as almost made him to despair of mercy. Sure this might have been expected; but on the contrary, he often said, that *he never lost his hope*. This is good, when well founded, but when not, it must and will perish. Blessed then is he who feareth always : who from a strong conviction of guilt, dreads being disappointed in a matter of such importance. The sullen indifference of Watt, was easily perceived by those who visited him, and every mean was used to awaken him, to a proper concern about the one thing needful. To have hope



and that seemingly not well grounded, is exceedingly dangerous. The answer to the letter from Perth, shows what were the views of Watt, and what he wished to persuade others: It was as follows.

MY DEAR SIR,      *Edin. Castle, 13th. Sept. 1794.*

Your esteemed favour, of date the 7th instant, I received in course of post, and humbly thank you for it. I should have acknowledged its receipt without loss of time, were my mind fit for the task. —Indeed I immediately attempted it, and wrote some what like an answer, but on a revival threw it aside. The same I did a second time, and now, I renew the attempt a third time.

My state of mind is such, as will not permit me to enter upon the circumstances, which brought me to my present misfortunate situation. I presume it would be unnecessary, as the whole must have been laid, at full length, before the Public. May God grant that all christians be enabled to avoid the Rock on which I have splitted, and sanctify abundantly my fall to them, by making them more diffident of their own strength, to withstand temptations from the world, sin, and Satan! and to rely on, and seek after that almighty Grace to which you  
have

have directed me. To the Grace of God, exhibited and held forth to me in the Gospel, in consequence of what Jesus Christ the mighty Saviour has done, taught, and suffered, and is still doing, I desire to look ;—this is all my salvation, and all my desire. Here, I will rest, and if I perish, I perish.

I cannot, I dare not extenuate my guilt. I would be sometimes overwhelmed with a sense of my sins ; but for the hope of free unmerited mercy through Jesus. I have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and the hearts of the godly, opened the mouths of enemies to religion, and hurt the feelings of my superiors, whom I am bound by the word of God to reverence and honour. But, with all my crimes about me, I rely upon that sacrifice which the Lord Jesus made, when, on Calvary mount, he offered himself to God for the sins of his people.

I would be happy to see you, but why take such trouble about unworthy me ? Should you be disposed to come over, and time and conveniency permit, it is necessary you get a recommendatory letter from Provost Caw, or some person of influence to the Sheriff of the County of Edinburgh before you are allowed an interview with me alone. By this means, I doubt not but it may be obtained. My best wishes to yourself, spouse, the

Rev.

Rev. Mr. Scott, and all acquaintances. I humbly solicit an interest in your prayers at the Throne of Grace, and I am, with great affection.

My Dear Sir,

Yours, very Sincerely,

ROBERT WATT.

While he thus wrote, he still did not appear properly humbled, nor sufficiently sensible of guilt. To have just views of the doctrines of the Gospel, may qualify one for expressing the true causes of confidence, though these may not be really experienced. Convinced of this, one, who visited him, told him that he did not come to inform him of the doctrines of the Gospel, for he knew these; but to remind him that he had been a great sinner, and that it was his duty to confess, and make a clean breast: that he owed this to his country, and to the cause of religion, which he had grievously injured.

A few days passed, without any thing worthy of narration occurring. Soon after, he received an answer to his letter to Mr. G——. from Perth, in the following terms:

DEAR



DEAR ROBERT,

*Perth, 24th Sept. 1794.*

I take the opportunity of Mr. L— to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed favour of the 13th current. I bless God that he has given you a just view of your situation, and, at the same time has fixed your attention on the atonement and sacrifice of the son of God, as your only ground of hope and confidence. No sinner can derive abiding consolation from any other source. But here, there is consolation for the most wretched; yes, for the vilest sinner. O that the Holy Spirit of God may unfold unto your view all the unsearchable riches that are treasured up in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer.

Your backslidings are notorious to all, but now that you are ready to acknowledge yourself, of the chief of sinners, I will not doubt in this, but remind you that there is still forgiveness with our God, that he may be feared. Allow me to call your attention to the 14. Chapter of Hoseah in connection with Jer. xxxi. 18—20. Nothing can exceed this beautiful and endearing representation of the divine character. Indeed the whole Bible is full of encouragements to guilty men, to look for mercy at the hand of God, through the blood of Christ,

Christ. And often the most unlikely persons are pitched upon, as monuments of the exceeding riches of the divine Grace. Your fall has been the subject of much conversation. I trust your recovery will be for an example to Backsliders in all ages not to despair.

I earnestly pray that you may be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that the peace of God may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus, and that he may guide you by his counsel, till he bring you safe to his glory. But you are cut off in the midst of your days, and perhaps the death you have to undergo, may create you much uneasiness and anxiety. But, my dear sir, that Redeemer, in whom you trust, can not only give you victory over death, but over it in every form. He can make your strength equal to your day. He has promised this. Trust him, for his word cannot fail. Remember we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. I commend you to God, and to the word of his Grace, which is able to build you up and to keep



keep you from falling, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

I understand none but Clergymen are admitted to see you, else, if circumstances permitted, I would personally bid you farewell.

Mrs. G——r joins me in love to you, and I am with true regard :

Dear Sir,

Most affectionately Your's.

W—— G——R.

This letter made very little alteration, nay, is evidently calculated to fortify him in his hope. The author of it believing, from the manner in which he wrote, that a change must have taken place on his conduct and views. But it is easy to see, that a person, speculatively acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, can express himself in a manner to satisfy another, though he may not feel as he should. There is a most material difference, indeed; between knowing and feeling the power of religion on the soul; speculation is not practice.

Whilst Watt was in this callous frame of mind,

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and grasping after a pardon from his Majesty, he wrote the following answer to the excellent letter sent him by J—— C—— a friend in town.

MY DEAR SIR,    *Edin. Castle, 2nd Octr. 1794.*

Though you may believe that my mind must have been little disposed to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter, and the inclosed, when they came to hand; yet a sense of gratitude impelled me to write you an answer without delay. It contained the expressions of my intellectual feelings in connection with the Word of God.

Vanity of vanities, nay, saith the Royal Preacher, all is vanity. Of this great truth, we can only be made sensible, by one of two causes; either by Grace the saving influences of the Holy Ghost, or by extraordinary crosses. But the consequent effects of that exceed, in real profit to the subject, those of this, as much as heaven does the earth, nay as the Creator does the creature, the one is but transitory, and is calculated to harden, or to drive to despair; the other enlightens, humbles, strengthens, comforts, and is permanent! Hence the perseverance in holiness of some, amidst relapses, and the final fall of others.

I purpose to write you more fully afterwards. I hope that you will excuse my breaking off so abruptly at present. I hope you will present my best wishes to such of my christian acquaintances, as you may have an opportunity of seeing or writing to. I trust Christians are in my esteem the excellent ones of the earth, and with whom has been my delight. With these I hold communion now at the Throne of Grace. And may the God of all Grace grant, that my fellowship may be with them in the ages to come.

I humbly request an interest in your prayers. That all temporal and spiritual good may attend you is the sincere desire of—

My Dear Sir,

Your Friend and

Most Humble Servant,

ROBERT WATT,

It is obvious to every reader, that this letter is similar to one wrote from a christian correspondent to another, in the ordinary circumstances of human life. Nay, that there is here a plain indication of a mind employed in some other matter, as a chief object of pursuit; and only turning aside to the



business of religion, because a letter is to be answered to a religious correspondent. True, indeed, he here bewails the vanity of human life; but is it in that strong and copious manner, which might naturally have been expected from one, who had felt it so mournfully verified in his own experience. A mind deeply penetrated with sin, and properly impressed in the view of death, must, it is humbly conceived, have expressed itself in a very different manner. Alas! is there not little on the subject of religion here, from one within a few weeks of his exit, and bound with chains, waiting a violent and shameful death!

Nor could he conceal, hidden as his temper was, the chief object of his attention at this period. He showed himself as eager to talk about obtaining a pardon from the King, as obtaining the pardon of numerous and enormous crimes against the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Nay, it must also be very distressing to the pious mind, to hear that he always sought to obtain his pardon, by pretending that his motives and designs were different from what *they were in reality*. Great grace is necessary, indeed, to vanquish the reigning principle of a vicious heart. It will struggle until the very last, before it yield. Almighty Grace, however, can conquer every depraved habit. God can purify from every idol.



Ill founded as the opinion was, yet it is undoubtedly true that Watt did entertain expectations of being liberated by force. Several expressions which dropped from his lips indicated this hope. One day he enquired if all the people were quiet, and if no disturbance was in the city. Upon hearing of the success of the French joy beamed in his countenance. One evening he heard the reports of the watch guns, in the War Ships, in Leith Roads, and in the morning he most eagerly enquired, what was the meaning of that firing. Another day, when one was sitting with him, a noise was heard in the room above them. Immediately a glance of inexpressible joy beamed over his countenance, and he in transport said is not that firing at the castle? Deluded and now sadly disappointed expectations! Little did he know, or believe what the opinion of reason and of the Public was concerning him. God forbid that ever reason, or the public mind in Britain, should delight in plunder, or in blood.

It was truly singular to observe what cordiality subsisted between him and Downie; especially as Downie averred that Watt was the chief cause in leading him and all the rest into the horrid plan. Nor was this denied by Watt himself. Probably this was the true cause, why Watt was so dreadfully affected,

fectcd, as he shewed and expressed himself, when about to be placed in the same room with Downie. Many are companions in guilt, who desire not to be companions in punishment. Then they tremble at the approach of them, whom they formerly delighted in. What will be the sad situation of ungodly companions, when chained together in the land of unalleviated anguish!

The conduct of Watt, at this period, produced much concern to all the pious and benevolent in Edinburgh. Among the rest, to that friend, who formerly wrote to him. Anxiously enquiring, he learned the situation of Watt. Then, his benevolent and pious mind was filled with deep concern, and he instantly seized the pen, and with all the ardour of pious concern for the salvation of the soul, he wrote the following letter:

MY DEAR SIR,

I feel considerably agitated at the thought of writing to you, in your present mournful situation, and at some loss how to address you.

The important and solemn moment is just approaching, when you must enter into that eternity, of which you have heard so much from your earliest years;—of mingling with those spirits who  
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are before the Throne, or those who are reserved in chains unto the Judgment of the Great Day--What a thought! If ever a mind should be roused in any situation, yours is that one. If you are in any measure convinced, you *must* consider yourself a notorious offender against that immaculate and jealous Jehovah, who perfectly knows, and minutely observes our external profession, our secret and inward actions, and motions.

For a moment survey your windings and turnings in iniquity since the days of your youth—Only consider what is the real intrinsic guilt (if that be possible) of one transgression—Ah! how great! And the impossibility of one iota being pardoned without adequate satisfaction—But class all you are chargeable with together, and how vastly inconceivable the amount! Yet strange to say; so impenetrably hardened is the heart of man, that even this horrible sight cannot alarm him.—Nothing but the precious Grace of the Almighty can give either a proper sense of sin, or sight of a Saviour's blood.

When I read your letter to me, you appeared to have much more peace and recollection than I could have conceived; especially when I considered, how short a time it was wrote after receiving your awful sentence. I immediately dreaded that you  
might



might not have proper views of things. Now be candid—Has this question ever occurred to your own mind—Is it possible that a Christian could continue for two or more years in the uninterrupted, though secret commission of known wilful sin, and at the same time no abatement of his outward profession? I make no decisive conclusion upon this; but I confess it is enough to alarm any man who must plead guilty in that point, and appears exceedingly like Judas associating with the Prince of Life, while murderous intentions lurked in his breast. I make this observation, because you write, as if you had been a Christian all along, without appearing to call it in question. If it really be true what I hear, that you eat the Lord's Supper the Sabbath before you was apprehended—I cannot resist the thought, that you eat and drank judgment to yourself. As a real friend to your soul, I mention, and beg you seriously to weigh these matters; to ask grace from above, to discover your true state and character before God—Not to approach the Saviour as a Child, but as a chief sinner—not like a Simeon, who waited for God's salvation, but as a Saul who resisted it. True, there is nothing pleasing to the Lord, in contrition or conviction, but as it is His work, and according to His general plan of procedure, in bringing in outcasts, or restoring Backsliders.

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You compare your fall to Peter's: Have you had Peter's powerful look from the Saviour, and a similar sight of your fall? The case of Peter, Paul, and others, is set up as beacons to all succeeding generations, and to proclaim the exceeding riches of Divine Mercy; and no doubt are intended as grounds of encouragement to guilty sinners, so long as Jesus is set before them. I think your uncommon fall is one of the most solemn warnings to surviving professors of religion, ever I read or heard of; and if you obtain mercy (which is my sincere prayer) and ascend to the excellent glory, you shall be a conspicuous pillar in the temple of our God.

If you have a spark of grace, you will make confession of your guilt, and give all the information to Government in your power, of what you know endangers the stability and tranquillity of the State. It is no more than what is the duty of one, who once was attempting to overturn the security of society, and has got a gracious view of his folly and criminality. In short, it confounds me to think, how a man professing christianity, could take pleasure in associating with men, whose conduct and converse must have been diametrically opposite to its dictates.



I know you are not ignorant of the *terrors* of the Lord; I never consider'd you unacquainted with the *doctrines* of the Gospel. You have often declared in my hearing as your belief, what the Bible uniformly holds forth—that men in consequence of Adam's disobedience, as our common Father and representative, are born enemies to God—that recovery from this situation is entirely owing to Sovereign Grace, manifested in the obedience and expiatory death of the Son of God.—That it is by the imputation of his perfect meritorious righteousness, independent of every other consideration that a sinner is justified before God—that there is the fullest and most satisfactory evidence, that Jesus is the Christ. Are you *now*, Sir, fully satisfied and convinced of these truths? Have you embraced them with much more eagerness than ever a hungry man did his meat? Unless the Lord hath carried them home by his Spirit, making a gracious and powerful discovery of them to your understanding, and fixed them on your heart, you cannot truly relish or value them. Sorrow for sin, sincerity of confession—duties performed, &c. of themselves can give no real relief to a troubled mind and conscience. Nothing but faith in the substitutional Sacrifice of the precious Saviour, can dispel or destroy the fear of death and its consequences.

Dr.



Dr. Samuel Johnson used to say, that he believed there was not a man upon earth void of the fear of death: Upon his principles, his observation would hold good. So soon as a man loses sight of heaven as a free gift; of the atonement of Jesus as the alone way unto it, and as his unchangeable security for attaining possession of it, he must be under constant alarm and uncertainty about his future happiness.

You have still the sympathy and prayers of your friends. Take encouragement from this, that there is still some hope in Israel concerning you, that peradventure God may be pleased to pardon all your sins. You have not the smallest ground to expect a pardon from your Country; that is all over. It appears at least probable from 1 Peter iv. 15. that some believing man may suffer as a murderer or a thief; for it is to such that he directs his exhortation. But the spot is uncommon. However, I fear 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10 is too, too applicable to you; 'But they that will be  
' rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into  
' many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown  
' men in destruction and perdition. For the love  
' of money is the root of all evil: which while  
' some coveted after, they have erred from the

' faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.'

It pierces me to the heart to think, that, perhaps, this may be the last time I shall have an opportunity of addressing you;—that soon your dust must mingle with those of a thousand generations. O examine the Scriptures as the Oracles of Truth! search them for the *Pearl* of greatest value. Let it be your great concern to know a crucified Saviour, whom to know aright is the commencement and sure evidence of eternal Life—to roll the burden of your burdened soul upon him, who has the keys of hell and of death.

What pleasure would it afford you to behold those chains taken off, that prison door set open, and a pardon presented from our lawful Sovereign! But how infinitely more important, desirable, and precious is that liberty wherewith Christ sets his people free! that pardon which he presents to a Redeemed sinner. We have often met in the Church below.—O that we may meet in the Zion that is above, to praise God for Redeeming love. A few more of these years shall bring a conclusion to the whole human race, now upon earth; but race unto race, shall praise the Saviour's name.

I would most willingly comply with your desire to see me, but access, I understand, is very difficult to be obtained; and seeing so many good and faithful ministers daily attending, renders a visit from me unnecessary. Farewell.

I am Your Sincere and Feeling Friend,

EDINBURGH,  
Oct. 5th, 1794. }

J—C—.

This faithful, affectionate, expressive, awakening, and instructive letter was not without its effects upon the mind of him who received it. Plain dealing is the best medicine for a callous conscience. Aided by this letter, the concern about Eternal things struggled severely with the anxious desire to obtain pardon from his Majesty. Watt still continued to sue for mercy by representing that his only view was to benefit Government by information. Unfounded as this assertion was, still he repeated and adhered unto it, so long as hope of pardon was entertained. Under the impressions produced by that candid letter, he wrote an answer to the second letter which he received from his friend in Perth, in the following words:

MY DEAR SIR,

*Edin. Castle, Oct. 9th, 1794.*

I received both your friendly and edifying letters.



ters. I am persuaded from the situation of affairs, that you would not be permitted to converse with me, but in the presence of the officer upon guard; as none are permitted but clergymen. I consider it a blessing, and a matter of great thankfulness, that this is allowed me. None are so sensible of its value, as those deprived of public ordinances. I hope, though thus deprived, that my heart is with the Lord's people. May their fellowship be my privilege through Eternity. The scene of mortality is near a close; few, very few revolving suns will open to my astonished mind—wonders inconceivable! For the intelligent principle, that now actuates this clayey tabernacle, shall not become insensible, or be annihilated; but gain additional vigour, and a degree of perception, till then unknown. 'Here we see darkly as through a glass; but there face to face. Here we know but in part; but there shall we know even as we are known.'

Happy were it for the gay and the profligate, were they to lay those things to heart, and thus to judge. But how awful the thought, that many, who consider the hour of separation between us and our momentary enjoyments, as mere natural evil, which, as we cannot avoid, we ought to drown with one debauch of sensuality, or one pursuit

pursuit of sublunary objects after another, shall, at an unexpected moment, be absorbed in Eternity.

Though my situation may be deemed particularly unfortunate, yet, I receive it with contrition and thankfulness. I bless God, that he has given me time to reflect on the errors of my life, when he might have cut me off without a moment's reflection.

He has not left himself without a witness; but as my day is, he administheth spiritual strength. I am lost in the ocean of Redeeming love. Astonishing, indeed, must have been that love, which induced the Son of God to die for sinners. The duration of the world, and the capacity of a Seraph, are insufficient to disclose it; therefore, a glorious Eternity is secured to the saints, and less time would be inadequate to acquaint them fully of its extent.

The numberless gradation of existences in the liquid element, from the *Animalculæ* that compose it, to the Leviathan that bears rule;—the countless variety of plants generated by the earth, from the smallest pile of grass, to the tallest Cedar;—the various orders of animals, from the meanest insect,

infect, to man, the Lord of this world, and the favourite of Heaven ;—the countless Majesty and ponderous bodies that bespangle the vast vault of Heaven, and the immensity of space, from the visible Suns that give light, to the opaque satellite, that revolves round its primary, together with their innumerable variety of inhabitants ; display in their production out of nothing, a Power—in their government and disposition, a Wisdom—and in their preservation and provision, a Goodness Divine !

But these, as all the other perfections of the Deity are but faintly exhibited in the works of creation, to what they are in the amazing work of Redemption !—God manifest in the flesh—holding familiar converse with his creature man, as one man does with another—born under that law, which himself gave originally to man, as the rule of his obedience, and which man had violated—fulfilling all righteousness in his perfect obedience—and suffering in his soul, both in the Garden, and on the Cross, all that anguish which Divine Justice could inflict for sin imputed—and all this for man !—Be astonished O Heavens, and rejoice, O Earth, for the Lord hath done it !

Please present my best wishes to all inquiring,  
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but more especially christian acquaintances. That grace, mercy and peace, may rest and abide on yourself and worthy spouse, is the sincere desire of,

Dear Sir,

Your Unfortunate, and

Most Obedient Humble Servant,

ROB. WATT.

May we meet in the abodes of eternal light and joy, never more to separate. Farewell.

R——W——T.

The manner in which Watt expresses himself in this letter, is truly astonishing! He writes in all the power of recollected firmness. His mind unagitated and serene. In this letter he exhibits a strength of sentiment, of expression, and of composition, beyond what he usually did. In this letter also, he, in all the confidence of recollected calmness, narrates his enjoyment of Divine support, and his hopes of future happiness. Nor can any person object to the ground of his hope as here expressed, who is properly acquainted with the Oracles of Truth. But how must it add to the astonishment, and also to the deep concern of

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the pious mind, to be informed, that during all this time, and while he thus wrote, he was acting a double part, and concealing the true motives of that conduct, which brought him to an untimely death ! How afflicting to hear an intelligent, and well-informed man concealing the truth so near his last moments ! Some who visited him, thought it a proper method to endeavour to fix conviction upon his mind, by inducing him to write an account of the motives that inclined him to such a conduct. It was also wished to obtain information from him. Perhaps, however, this rather tended to divert his mind from the chief business of a dying man ; more especially as his character gave good reason to suspect, that he would labour to put the best appearance upon his past conduct. If, however, any material discovery was to be made, then the good of society called for the use of his pen. But if not, since the superior good ought always to be preferred, then certainly the salvation of his soul should have been chiefly attended unto. “ What will not a man give in exchange for his soul ? ” Were it not that it might offend, it might be alleged that this was one of the devices of Satan to retard the work of Grace in his soul, as long as possible, if he could not altogether.

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Unto them who were admitted to converse with him it was too evident, that, within a few days of his death, he entertained the faint hope of a pardon, or of some mitigation of his punishment; therefore, it is easy to perceive how his mind would operate. It was evident, that except the first few days after his sentence, he took small delight in searching of the Scriptures. Satan directs his temptations against the word of God, well knowing its vast importance to salvation. Christ says unto all, "search the Scriptures, for "in them ye think, ye have eternal life, and they "are they which testify of me." But Satan says *read not* the Bible, nor search the Scriptures; because his chief aim is to deprive men of Eternal Life. After the hopes of pardon began to be greatly abated, and also when Downie was removed from him, (which was done several days before Watt's execution,) it was expected that he would be more deeply concerned about salvation. But ah! nothing but the Almighty power of God can penetrate any heart! Still, indeed, he heard what was said to him with attention, and expressed himself in a manner, that, had he not been so notoriously criminal, and of such a duplicity of character, would have afforded great satisfaction. There was in general, however, such an indifference about personal guilt, and so small sorrow for



it, that was truly painful to the serious mind to behold. Nay even so strong was falsehood in his breast, that it fell both from his lips, and his pen, within a day or two of his death. In his petition which he wrote for pardon, in his letter to the Lord Advocate, and in two letters to another gentleman, he strongly averred, that his sole and principal object was to benefit Government, by giving information.

But his never seeming to see the justice of his sentence in a proper light, nor to feel the criminality of his conduct, is another evidence to those formerly specified, that he actually embraced the principles of the friends of the people. This is farther confirmed by this consideration, that he does not appear to have acted candidly, nor to have given all the information to Government that he might. It was not to be supposed that, since he was the Head of the plan here, he could be ignorant of the Chiefs in London, Dublin, and particularly in the different places of Scotland: but, as far as yet known, he has not informed concerning these. Nay, may it not be added, that, enraged and inveterate against Government, and rooted in other principles, he remained determined not to serve his Country in the least. Several days previous to his death, he was employed

ployed in writing what he called a narrative of facts. Should these appear, the public will be at liberty to judge whether they are facts or not. When the contrary was plainly insinuated unto himself, and he informed that all his attempts to impose upon the public mind would be in vain; because, from the full evidence laid already before them, their minds were confirmed in their opinion of him, nor could even his assertions, though in that situation where truth might be expected, alter their opinion, unless he had stronger evidence to oppose; and when some parts of the evidence was condescended upon, he could not in the least enervate its force, but laboured by false assertions to establish the view which he was giving.

This conversation, however, so staggered him, that he said, That if any change had taken place in his mind, at any time, respecting politics, he should be sure to mention it. O how destructive, once to adopt a false system of conduct!—because a thousand attempts will be made to support it, before the haughtiness of the human mind will depart from it. Nor is it intended from these remarks, to lead the public to form any unfavourable opinion respecting the inward state of Watt's mind; but simply to narrate the opinion formed of him at that period, and the causes for forming it.

it. The Scripture speaks of some being saved, yet so as by fire : And of some being pluckt as brands out of the fire. It is difficult to say how often and how long the leading and reigning principles of a depraved heart may shew themselves in action, even in that heart which is renewed by the Divine Spirit. Grace can dwell beside great corruption. Nor will depravity depart from the human heart, until the foul wing to the land of Glory. Cautious then, indeed, man should be in forming his opinion concerning the future state of his fellow-creature.

During the last Sabbath of his life, he was keenly employed in the exercises of devotion ; and he himself said that he had considerable joy and comfort. On Monday he was also composed ; and expressed himself so to one who waited upon him, that he averred, That had he been dying a common and ordinary death, his hopes would have been very great concerning him.

This day he wrote the following short but expressive answer to the letter sent him by. J— C— his friend in Edinburgh :

My



MY DEAR SIR, *Edin. Castle, 13th Octr. 1794.*

I was favoured with your very instructive and sympathising letter. I expected to be able to write you at some length. But attention to a narrative of facts to be published after my decease, deprives me of this opportunity. Accept of the following as a reply to your letter.

‘ You who were sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.’

May we meet in the abodes of everlasting life, light, and joy. Farewell.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your Unfortunate Friend, and

Humble Servant,

ROBERT WATT.

The author of this letter must have been a deceiver indeed, if it does not express hope concerning him. This was the day on which the  
report

report of the delay of Downie's execution reached this place. This gave a deadly blow to Watt's hopes of pardon. When informed of this, and also that death was unavoidable, and likewise that his destined place of execution was altered to the common place, he heard all without emotion, and replied, That he had never looked for any thing else but death, since his sentence.

He continued to write on Tuesday with unabated recollection, and strength of composition.

Instead of murmuring that Downie had been allowed to live behind him, he rejoiced at that circumstance, because that he had been the chief hand in leading him on in those practices which brought him to his present situation. He continued to write until between two and three in the afternoon of the 14th, when his papers were removed to the Sheriff.

During the whole of the time after his sentence he eat heartily. His keeper declares that he eat two rolls to breakfast every day, except the morning of his execution; and that he received for dinner what he chose to call for, which was of the best, and in great variety. Unless when he ordered

ed fish he drank no spirits, but drank two bottles of porter every day, and sometimes more.

When his papers were removed, he sat musing and reading sometimes until nigh his usual time to sleep. Then he prayed about half an hour, and lay down to sleep, and slept very well until morning. When he awoke he was in a state of insensibility, as it were, for several minutes. Neither pain, nor thought, but something similar to a vacuity of mind prevailed. He was visited early in the morning by one of the ministers of the city. Being asked by another who visited him that morning, how he had felt during the night? His answer was, Pretty comfortable, but that he had experienced several severe struggles. Being asked whether those arose from the dread of death, or from what cause? He replied, that, in a most violent and instantaneous manner, blasphemous thoughts concerning Christ had been darted into his mind—impious thoughts of his not being God, and his inability to save. These he prayed against, and strongly laboured to repel; which he had endeavoured to do with great difficulty.

Satan strenuously labours to induce men to deny and disbelieve Christ's supreme divinity; confident that unless men both believe in this, and

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rest upon Him alone for salvation, as an Almighty Saviour, *they must eternally perish.*

These blasphemous thoughts produced Watt much anxiety and sorrow on the morning of his last day. Being asked if any part of his past conduct now lay more particularly heavy upon his conscience? He replied that there was not; but that he felt his mind wonderfully composed and serene. In the midst of conversation he interrupted, requesting to pray. In the time of prayer, he was much engaged, and deeply moved after it was done. Then, after a few minutes conversation, he was requested to pray himself, which he did with great earnestness and fervour; bewailing his sins in general, and the great vileness of his heart; and blessing God for what he had made known of His mercy and grace through Jesus. In his meditations, he was that morning much employed in contemplating the severity of Jesus' sufferings in the Garden and on the Cross; and reflecting that all the sufferings to which any could be exposed, were infinitely less than nothing, compared with those of the Son of God in behalf of men.

About ten o'clock his chains were knocked off. During the doing of this, he was quite recollected  
and

and composed. Nor did he appear to feel any extraordinary emotions of soul in the view of death. When this operation was finished, it was remarked unto him, that blessed are they who have the chains of sin and corruption broken in sunder, by which satan holds them in his service. That whom the son makes free, they are free indeed. He replied, that he was just thinking of this, when the smith was employed.

After this he began to pray, and continued for a long time in the most strong and violent cries for mercy and salvation. O! what concern and earnestness does the view of death, and a proper desire after salvation give to the human mind! Then men pray in real earnest, and languor and formality fly away. Since his time was so short, and since prayer is the great mean by which God communicates salvation to men, he was earnestly entreated to spend the most of his few remaining moments in prayer. This advice appeared agreeable to his own ideas, therefore was complied with; and several times he prayed during that forenoon.

Having requested this clergyman to attend him to the place of execution, along with Principal Baird, he consented; and agreed to wait his



arrival in the common prison, as no conversation could be had with him when conveying to the place of execution. Then after prayer, he took leave of him; when another Minister came in, who waited with him until he was brought forth to execution.

On the forenoon of this fatal day, J—— C—— his friend in Edinburgh, wrote the following answer to Watt's letter of the 13th Instant :

MY DEAR SIR,

Your few but most expressive lines, received yesterday, came with all the force of the last testimony of a dying man, and a man in whose death there is hope.

I congratulate you upon the evidence, I have just now heard, which you have given of your faith in the great Redeemer. I shall not detain you, but commend you to God and the Word of his Grace, who alone can support you in your last moments, and grant you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Farewell.

I am Yours &c.

EDINBURGH, }  
Oct. 15th, 1794. }

J—— C——.

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The appointed fatal hour drawing near, the Ministers of Justice arrived at the castle. The criminal was brought forth and placed upon the hurdle, which was painted black, and drawn by an old white horse. He was drawn backwards, bound to the hurdle, and the executioner seated directly before him dressed in black, with the fatal axe in his hand. It is also reported, but it is not narrated as certain, that some of the horrible pikes, which procured Watt that seat, were placed at his feet in the bottom of the hurdle. In this situation, attended by the Sheriff-depute and the Sheriff-substitute, dressed in black, with white gloves, and white rods, the Constables, and two hundred of the Argyleshire fencibles, walking the dead march, they proceeded from the Castle unto the limits of the city, where they were met by the two Junior Magistrates and the Reverend Principal Baird, preceded by the City constables, the Town-officers and the City guard forming a hollow square. Then the soldiers returned unto the Castle, and the rest attended the criminal to the place of execution. The procession was awfully solemn, and strongly impressive! In token of silent acquiescence the croud opened of their own accord, to allow the procession to advance. It was singularly slow, and the most profound silence reigned in the multitude. Nothing

thing similar to this was seen in Edinburgh for a long period, and may the Great Protector of Britain grant that the like may never be seen to the latest ages !

The external appearance of the criminal heightened the terror, and the solemnity of the scene. He truly exhibited a picture of the most abject dejection and wretchedness. Placed in a hurdle, in company with the hangman, holding the weapon which was to separate his head from his body ! Unpitied and unlamented by the multitude, unless by that humane sympathy, which the most atrocious of criminals excite in the human mind. Perhaps there never was a man in a civilized country, that suffered more universally detested.

He was wrapt up in an old great coat ; his lins exceedingly dirty ; a red night-cap on his head, with a round hat above it ; his stockings coarse, torn in several places, hanging loose ; his shoes old and dirty, and also loose : Nay, his whole external appearance wretched in the extreme.

It is said, that the reason of his appearing in this manner, was, that having assigned all his clothes



clothes and books over to another, that person would not permit him to put on any better clothes; and even the hat that was on his head, this person received, along with his watch, the very time he was hanging.

Such was the case with that poor man, who, but a few months before, was looking eagerly forward to great affluence and honour; nay, expecting soon to give law to the King of Britain, and to rule the Nation!

Surely God catcheth the proud in the imaginations of their own hearts. The finner's hands make the very snares into which they are caught. Nor can it be passed over in silence, that tho' it was once otherwise intended \*, yet he was conveyed down that very place which would have been the field of blood, had his plan been put in execution. Yes, in that very spot, he proposed to inclose the military, and to commence action. Oh! what would have been the situation of the inhabitants, and the dreadful effusion of innocent blood! O Edinburgh! let not ingratitude to kind Heaven, for such a singular deliverance, mark thy future conduct!

\* It was proposed to execute him on the Castle-hill, which was departed from.



conduct ! The providential apprehending of Watt, just when the plot was near ripe for execution, evidently shows that this deliverance was of God, and not of man. ' This is the doing of the Lord,' and it ought to be ' wondrous in our eyes.

But to return to our guilty criminal, during the the procession along his intended field of innocent blood, his countenance was fixed, his head inclining back, his eyes darting towards the heavens and the white of his eyes turned up; his body quite motionless, and he seemingly totally regardless of the vast multitude that surrounded, and gazed upon him. Having to pass through the prison to the scaffold, which is upon the West end of it, and in the view of that street where he intended to inclose the military, the hurdle was drawn to the prison door. There he was unbound by the hangman, and conveyed into the Tolbooth, attended by the Sheriffs, Baillies, the Rev. Principal Baird, and the officers. He stopped in a room in the prison, there the other minister whom he desired to attend him, was waiting him. This was that very minister formerly mentioned, who felt so much of the direful effects of Watt's malice and cruelty, whom he now entreated to be with him in his last moments. After a few words passed, that minister asked him  
how

how he had been composed during the time of coming down from the castle? He replied, that he had been calm and very comfortable, and he found himself happy in the views of death. Being seated on a chair, and breathing for a moment, he requested that he might be allowed to pray, before going out to the scaffold, which was cheerfully granted. Then he kneeled; Principal Baird standing on the right hand, and the other minister on the left, and in an ardent manner prayed. In his prayer he was perfectly recollected, and surprisingly sensible and accurate. It was in general terms, and abounded with the local phrases of prayer, used among the pious in Edinburgh; tho' a singular ardour and earnestness prevailed thro' the whole of it, yet there appeared a want of personal confession; and particularly the guilt of the crime for which he suffered. After prayer, he went forth to the awful place of execution, attended by these two Ministers, and the Sheriffs, Bailies, and Officers. There, with his face to the multitude, and Principal Baird standing on his right hand, and the other minister on the left, both of them uncovered, Principal Baird read the following part of the 25th Psalm, second version, ver. 6.

M

Thy

Thy mercies, that most tender are,  
Do thou, O Lord, remember,  
And loving kindnesses : for they  
Have been of old for ever.

Let not the errors of my youth,  
Nor sins rememb'ed be :

In mercy, for thy goodness sake,  
O Lord, remember me.

The Lord is good and gracious,  
He upright is also ;

He therefore sinners will instruct  
In ways that they should go.

The meek and lowly he will guide,  
In judgment just alway :

To meek and poor afflicted ones  
He'll clearly teach his way.

The whole paths of the Lord our God  
Are truth and mercy sure,

To such as keep his covenant,  
And testimonies pure.

Now for thine own name's sake, O Lord,  
I humbly thee intreat

To pardon mine iniquity :  
For it is very great.

In the singing of this very proper and singularly  
applicable Psalm, Watt joined with steady devo-  
tion, but sung with a low voice.

Then



Then Principal Baird prayed in a devout and ardent manner, singularly adapted to the mournful occasion, and expressive of his concern for the salvation of the unfortunate criminal. His prayer being ended, Watt having his Bible in his hand, desired to read a portion of it. The Principal directed his attention to the 55th Chapter of Isaiah; but he turned from this, and cast his eyes upon the 53d; then he turned up the 14th chapter of John's Gospel, which he read slowly, and without speaking aloud so as to be heard.

During the whole time that he held the Bible, and was reading, his hands never gave a shake; and his countenance appeared quite recollected.

After ending the reading of that chapter, he delivered his Bible to the minister standing on his left hand, then joining his hands together, he prayed for about ten minutes. In prayer, his voice was very low and faltering. He prayed with great fervency, and was much more personal in his confessions of sin, than in his former prayer in the prison, before he came out to the scaffold. He bitterly bewailed his sins, and entreated, that, when he closed his eyes upon the present scene, he might open them in glory, amid

angels and faints, that stand before the Throne of Glory. Having finished prayer, being informed by Principal Baird, that the time was near gone; he affectionately embraced him, and, turning to the other minister, did the same; and then, after recommending him to the Lord, both run from the view of what was to follow, into the room within the prison.

Then Watt ascended the platform by three steps, and was no sooner up, than he requested the Sheriff to allow him to come down again to pray; which was readily granted, and he kneeled and prayed about ten minutes, in great earnestness of soul. When he ascended the platform a second time, his countenance was more animated, and he conversed with the executioner with much composure. After the rope was placed around his neck, he stood with great calmness, and prayed about ten minutes, when he dropped a white handkerchief, as the signal to the executioner. A minute or two more was given him, then the platform dropped! Upon its fall, little agitation was perceivable amongst the spectators. The Sheriffs and Bailies stepped into the prison during the time he was hanging.

The body was allowed to hang for about 35  
minutes

minutes, until it was completely lifeless, when it was cut down and placed upon a black table, with a piece of wood prepared for the head and shoulders. Then the executioner came forward with a large axe in his hand, which he held up to the croud before giving the blow. This sight, to which they were totally unaccustomed, produced an instantaneous shock; and when it was uplifted, such a general cry and shout of horror burst forth, as made the executioner delay his blow; while numbers rushed off in all directions, to avoid the shocking sight! The executioner then, with two strokes, severed his head from his body; which being received in a basket, was by the executioner held up to the spectators, saying, *This is the head of a traitor!* The remains were then put into a coffin, and interred that evening, in the usual burying-place of criminals.

Such was the end of Robert Watt. Such the end of all his much desired affluence and power. May Almighty God grant that he may be the last who shall terminate his life for such a crime in this Kingdom. May this national example have its desired effect upon all who beheld it, and all who may hear thereof. May gratitude to Heaven for such a wonderful deliverance circulate  
through



through the various orders of society in Britain; and be speedily expressed in the purity of their manners. May the external blessings we have long enjoyed be transmitted unimpaired unto future generations. May our gracious Sovereign, long reign over a free and a happy people. May our Rulers prove a terror to evil-doers, and a praise unto them who do well. May War speedily terminate; and the tranquillity of Europe be again restored. May Commerce again flourish. And may Religion, which alone exalteth a people, be universally understood and practised; and all iniquity as ashamed hide its head.

THE END.

## VERSES,\*

WRITTEN ON SEEING THE EXECUTION  
OF ROBERT WATT.

---

Ah ! little think the gay licentious proud,  
Whom pleasure, pow'r, and affluence surround ;  
They, who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,  
And wanton, often cruel, riot waste ;  
Ah ! little think they, while they dance along,  
How many feel this very moment, Death ;  
And all the sad variety of pain ;  
How many sink in the devouring flood,  
Or more devouring flame. How many bleed,  
By shameful variance betwixt man and man. THOMSON,

---

Tho' great thy crime, tho' human laws refuse  
To grant thee mercy, yet the gentle Muse  
E'en over thee may drop a pitying tear,  
To please thy shade and grace thy mournful bier.  
Thy

\* The Editor subjoins these verses, as they appeared in a Volume of miscellaneous Poems, lately published by William Farquhar, and dedicated, *by permission*, To The Right Honorable Sir James Stirling, Baronet, Lord Provost and Lord Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh, and Colonel of The Edinburgh Volunteers ; and to The Officers and Gentlemen, who compose That Honorable and Patriotic Band. These Poems are also to be had at the Shop of A. Shirrefs, price Two shillings and sixpence, in Boards, or three shillings and sixpence, *neatly Bound*.—Such Gentlemen, therefore, of that respectable Corps, or others, who may have any intention to patronize said Performance, and may not as yet have had that opportunity, are requested to apply *as above*.

Thy guilt she hates, yet still thy fate deplores,  
 And hopes thou'lt mercy find on happier shores,  
 Sure no State Zealot will accuse her lays,  
 Which to humanity alone she pays ;  
 She grieves for guilt, for virtue's cause she mourns,  
 No party-rage in her calm bosom burns ;  
 Alike connected with the human race,  
 She feels their woes, and pities their disgrace.

Unhappy Britain ! why should factious rage  
 Thy sons mislead, or in wild plans engage ?  
 Ah ! why should Discord, under Freedom's guise  
 Lead men each social Virtue to despise ;  
 Lead them, like beasts, by pow'r alone to sway,  
 While subjects, not by love, but fear, obey !  
 How diff'rent this from Britain's happy laws,  
 Which want no advocate to plead their cause ;  
 Which virtue guard, nay, e'en their pow'r extend  
 To crimes, and even criminals defend :—  
 Till guilty found, the fated head o'ershade,  
 Nor without evidence will doom him dead.  
 Which e'en a Monarch's vices can command,  
 And from destructive plans withhold his hand.  
 Can this be bondage ? Where e'en Kings obey,  
 And Law alone bears universal sway. (spise ?

And are there found who can these laws de-  
 Unbounded licence who above them prize ?  
 Let such to Gallia's plains their views direct,  
 There see their fate, who such mild laws reject ;

See



See how her Cities, drench'd in floods of gore,  
Mistaken Freedom's furious rage deplore;  
See, mild Religion with a sigh retires,  
And with her flies each Virtue, or expires;  
See licenc'd Murder Freedom's name profane,  
And boldly use his dagger, ax, or chain;  
While 'neath his feet the regal sceptre bows,  
The crown invests his blood-bestained brows.

When such the scene! can any human mind  
For crimes like these a fate too odious find?  
Such crimes as these, unhappy man! were thine,  
Such were thy plans, and such thy dire design!  
But Britain's happier Genius wards the blow,  
And justly lays the proud oppressor low.  
May then thy fate an awful fear impart,  
To each disloyal and dishonest heart,  
That those who scorn the nobler band of *Love*,  
May, by the meaner motive, *Fear*, improve.

W. E. B. DUBOIS  
The first of these things is the  
the second is the third is the fourth  
the fifth is the sixth is the seventh  
the eighth is the ninth is the tenth  
the eleventh is the twelfth is the thirteenth  
the fourteenth is the fifteenth is the sixteenth  
the seventeenth is the eighteenth is the nineteenth  
the twentieth is the twenty-first is the twenty-second  
the twenty-third is the twenty-fourth is the twenty-fifth  
the twenty-sixth is the twenty-seventh is the twenty-eighth  
the twenty-ninth is the thirtieth is the thirty-first  
the thirty-second is the thirty-third is the thirty-fourth  
the thirty-fifth is the thirty-sixth is the thirty-seventh  
the thirty-eighth is the thirty-ninth is the fortieth  
the forty-first is the forty-second is the forty-third  
the forty-fourth is the forty-fifth is the forty-sixth  
the forty-seventh is the forty-eighth is the forty-ninth  
the fiftieth is the fifty-first is the fifty-second  
the fifty-third is the fifty-fourth is the fifty-fifth  
the fifty-sixth is the fifty-seventh is the fifty-eighth  
the fifty-ninth is the sixtieth is the sixty-first  
the sixty-second is the sixty-third is the sixty-fourth  
the sixty-fifth is the sixty-sixth is the sixty-seventh  
the sixty-eighth is the sixty-ninth is the seventieth  
the seventy-first is the seventy-second is the seventy-third  
the seventy-fourth is the seventy-fifth is the seventy-sixth  
the seventy-seventh is the seventy-eighth is the seventy-ninth  
the eightieth is the eighty-first is the eighty-second  
the eighty-third is the eighty-fourth is the eighty-fifth  
the eighty-sixth is the eighty-seventh is the eighty-eighth  
the eighty-ninth is the ninetieth is the ninety-first  
the ninety-second is the ninety-third is the ninety-fourth  
the ninety-fifth is the ninety-sixth is the ninety-seventh  
the ninety-eighth is the ninety-ninth is the hundredth